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TITLE:
METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PREVENTING ILLITERACY IN SUBSTANTIALLY
ALL MEMBERS OF A PREDETERMINED SET OF STUDENTS

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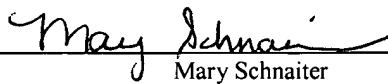
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**METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PREVENTING ILLITERACY IN
SUBSTANTIALLY ALL MEMBERS OF A PREDETERMINED SET OF
STUDENTS**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 Field of the Invention

The invention relates to literacy programs. The invention is particularly, but not exclusively, useful for preventing illiteracy and achieving grade-level literacy in substantially all members of a predetermined set of students, such as those students in kindergarten through third grade (K-3).

10 Description of Related Art

In 1965 the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) initiated a research program on reading. A division of the National Institutes of Health, NICHD research focuses on protecting the health and welfare of our nation's children. They maintain the key factor in a child's health and well being is their education--particularly, and instrumentally, their ability to read in order to be successful in school and in life. Failure to read is associated with juvenile crime, teenage pregnancy, and dropping out of school. Illiteracy is as disabling to a child as any of the diseases against which we regularly inoculate.

Illiteracy is a social, economic, and health issue that affects children throughout our nation, but particularly impacts the poor. Only 14% of children from low-income families can read. These children will disproportionately end up unemployed and in prisons. 75% of unemployed adults are illiterate, 85% of juvenile offenders, and 60% of prison inmates. Illiteracy costs America over \$250 billion a year.

While illiteracy is a costly American problem, it is not an inevitable one. Research over the past 30 years from NICHD proves that 95% of children can learn to read if taught early, deliberately, and effectively. The present system is explicitly built to achieve this 95% goal and designed as a primary prevention system to

identify all children in a predetermined group at risk for reading failure, to provide each one immediate intervention, to monitor that intervention, and to continue the intervention until every child is on track to become a reader. The system is designed to find and remediate the problem of illiteracy at its origin--in the critical developmental years--and then to irradiate it. The ability to ensure all literacy-capable children in America can read through a primary prevention system constitutes an economic, social, and health safeguard of significant proportion.

Learning to read is the single most important factor determining a child's success in school and progress in life. Reading skills established in the first years of school enable students' success throughout school and afterwards.

Previous literacy programs utilized written tests to measure reading skills in students. Such tests are administered at the beginning and end of the school year. In some cases, the teachers whose students are being tested may devise tests. Commercial tests are administered and the results reported for tabulation. Some weeks or months later, the results are delivered to the teacher. This type of program presents statistical measures of the results of administering those tests, as a way of documenting the overall reading level of the tested students at two points in time. Reports are given on the performance of all students tested; individual results are reported normatively; i.e., compared to other students. Such programs do not provide specific recommendations for improving the skills of lower-performing students. Additionally, such programs are not repeated throughout the school year to monitor the progress of students toward grade-level literacy.

Previous literacy programs have reported on the reading skills of students, but they have not provided for reporting on the performance of teachers in the improvement of those reading skills. Those programs that provide general suggestions for remedial instruction activities for students do not collect information on the application of those suggestions, to allow administrators to evaluate the teachers, as well as the students.

Previous classroom management systems for monitoring the grades of students throughout the school year have provided spreadsheets to enter traditional letter grades (i.e., A, B, C, D and F) for individual students. These grades are from the tests administered by the teacher in the normal course of the school year. The grades are collected throughout the school year, and the grade history of individual students can give the individual progress of those students. However, because the tests are not standardized, the results collected by one teacher cannot be aggregated with the results from other teachers.

As such, many typical literacy programs and classroom management programs suffer one or more shortcomings. Many other problems and disadvantages of the prior art will become apparent to one skilled in the art after comparing such prior art with the present invention as described herein.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides one minute standardized oral fluency measures for determining the level of development of critical reading skills in individual students. These measures are 92% predictive of where a student will be at the end of the year absent intervention. Teachers can enter test results directly into the system and receive summary results immediately. The system may be made available over the Internet to teachers in any location. The oral fluency measures are repeated throughout the school year for lower-performing students, to allow monitoring of those students' progress toward grade-level literacy. Specific recommendations of curriculum and instruction time may be made for each student, based on the measured reading skills of that student. The test results for individual students may be aggregated to provide summary reports for all students in a classroom, a school or a school district.

More specifically, aspects of the invention may be found in a method and system for preventing illiteracy and achieving grade-level literacy in substantially all members of a predetermined set of students. The method contains the steps of administering standardized oral fluency measures to the students in the predetermined

set of students. The results of those measures are recorded in a database and a standardized predictive measure of the current level of literacy of individual students is calculated. A report is presented for each student showing the student's recorded results; a calculated measure of literacy; and recommendations of curriculum and instruction time, based on the student's calculated measure of literacy. The report
5 may also include a timeline plot of the student's results through the school year, showing his/her progress toward grade-level literacy, which may also be plotted on the timeline. A schedule is also determined for each student, also based on the student's calculated measure of literacy, for repeating the steps of the method during
10 the school year, in order to achieve grade-level literacy in substantially all members of the predetermined set of students.

Aggregate reports may be prepared, showing a summary of the progress of all students in the predetermined set of students. Where the predetermined set of students is all students in a school district, aggregate reports may be prepared for a
15 subset of students in the district: e.g., all students in a single classroom, all students at a given grade level within a school, all students within a school.

Teachers may be surveyed for information regarding their activities in implementing the method of the present invention, and a report presented on that information, including recommendations to improve the teacher's implementation of
20 the method. Information regarding professional development activities may be collected and reported on. Activities may also be specified for the supervisors of the teachers, and surveys used to collect information about the performance of those activities by the supervisors. Reports can be prepared on the information collected on such supervisory activities and recommendations of supervisory activities to improve
25 the implementation of the method. Data entry screens and reports may be provided to teachers and administrators over the Internet.

As such, a system and method for preventing illiteracy and achieving grade-level literacy in substantially all members of a predetermined set of students is described. Other aspects, advantages and novel features of the present invention will

become apparent from the detailed description of the invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention and advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which like reference numbers indicate like features and wherein:

Figure 1 is a flow chart of the method for preventing illiteracy and achieving grade-level literacy in substantially all members of a predetermined set of students;

10 Figure 2 is a table of fluency measures and the reading skills they test for;

Figure 3A is an example of a teacher's instruction sheet for an oral fluency test;

Figure 3B is an example of a worksheet for administering an oral fluency test;

Figure 4A is an example of an oral fluency test results entry screen;

15 Figure 4B is an example of a weekly progress test results entry screen;

Figures 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D are example tables used for calculating a standardized measure of literacy from test results;

Figure 6A is an example report of individual student test results and calculated predictive measure of literacy

20 Figure 6B is an example report of recommendations of curriculum and instruction time;

Figure 7 is an example timeline plot of test results for a student, including an indication of a target score representing grade-level literacy;

Figure 8A is an exemplary aggregated report for a class;

25 Figure 8B is an exemplary aggregated report of recommendations of curriculum and instruction time;

Figure 9 is an exemplary aggregated report for a school;

Figure 10 is an exemplary aggregated report for a school district;

Figure 11 is an example of an implementation survey form;

Figures 12A and 12B are example supervisor survey forms;

5 Figure 13 is an example of an implementation report;

Figures 14A and 14B illustrate an example of a school supervisor report;

Figure 15 is an example of a district supervisor report;

Figure 16 is a block diagram of a computer system embodying the present invention;

10 Figure 17 is a block diagram of an Internet-based computer system embodying the present invention; and

Figure 18 is a diagram of screens and menu selections used in an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

15 Preferred embodiments of the present invention are illustrated in the Figures, like numerals being used to refer to like and corresponding parts of the various drawings. Figure 1 depicts illiteracy prevention method 10, an embodiment of the present invention. The measures of benchmark period 1 are administered to kindergarten through third grade (K-3) students at the beginning of the school year to
20 test their initial levels of literacy during each of these years. An initial predictive measure of literacy 2 is calculated from the results of those measures and used to make curriculum recommendations 3 for higher-performing readers. The initial measure of literacy is also used as the basis for extended instruction time recommendations 4 for lower-performing readers in kindergarten, and after-school
25 instruction recommendations 5 for lower-performing readers in first grade. Weekly progress monitoring measures 13 are administered to lower-performing readers in the periods between benchmark periods. Additional benchmarks 6, 7 and 8 are

administered at intervals throughout the school year. Based on the final benchmark 8, a final calculated predictive measure of literacy 9 is used to characterize the reading skills of the students at the end of the school year. Based on that final measure, summer school instruction recommendations 11 are made for lower-performing students, who receive extended instruction during the summer. Consequently, higher- and lower-performing students receive grade level promotions 12 and return to school the following year at the next grade level.

The benchmarks 1, 6, 7 and 8 and the weekly progress monitoring measures 13 include orally administered fluency measures. These measures assess critical reading skills that are predictive of a student's success in learning to read. The measures are brief and unobtrusive, requiring only about one minute to administer. A table of example fluency measures and the research-based, developmental literacy indicators for which they test are given in Figure 2. For example, the Initial Sound Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency measures test for Phonological Awareness. The Nonsense Word Fluency test tests for Alphabetic Principles. Figures 3A and 3B illustrate one such oral fluency test, in this case the test for phoneme segmentation fluency. Figure 3A depicts instructions and a script for the teacher to follow in administering the test. The teacher is given the script of a preparatory statement for the student, giving an example of a correct response and asking the student to respond to a practice word. The teacher is given samples of correct and incorrect responses to the practice word and scripts to use in reply to the student's response, correct or incorrect. Figure 3B depicts a work sheet for administering a test to a single student. A series of test words 15 to be read to the student are listed, and the correct phoneme responses 16 for each test word are shown for the teacher's reference. Results of the test are entered into blanks 17 to record the student's performance on the test. In Figure 3B, the results are the number of correct phonemes identified by the student out of the total number of phonemes presented by the test words. The results are totaled and entered into blank 18 for a single total score on the test.

Multiple oral fluency measures are administered as part of the benchmarks given throughout the school year, and Figure 4A illustrates the entry of those test scores for one benchmark into the database of an embodiment of the illiteracy prevention method. Test scores from each of the oral fluency measures are entered for each of the students in the class. In Figure 4A, the fluency measures making up Benchmark 1 for first grade are Letter Naming Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency. As indicated in the description of Figure 1, lower-performing students are re-tested weekly to monitor their progress toward improved literacy. Figure 4B depicts a screen used for the entry of the results of the weekly administration of the Nonsense Word Fluency test. The students' scores from the most recent Benchmark Period are displayed and weekly test results are entered for the lowest-performing readers. Medium-performing readers are re-tested monthly, rather than weekly, and the results of those measures also are entered using the screen depicted in Figure 4B.

Figures 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D depict tables used for kindergarten, first, second and third grades, respectively, to calculate a measure of literacy from each of the oral fluency test results entered by the teacher. For each grade level, and for each benchmark period, of which benchmark 22 is an example, the table presents literacy indicators identifying the reading skill tested by each of the oral fluency measures included in the benchmark, a range of possible test results for each fluency test, the type of result returned by each oral fluency test, and result ranges for identifying lower-, medium- and higher-performing readers. Examination of these result ranges will reveal that the test scores needed to remain at the same measured level of literacy rise, in expectation of improving literacy throughout the school year.

To illustrate the use of the tables of Figure 5A, benchmark 22 is described in more detail. Benchmarks one, two, three and four for kindergarten students comprise two oral fluency measures: Initial Sound Fluency and Letter Naming Fluency. Benchmark three further comprises Phoneme Segmentation Fluency while Benchmark four further comprises Nonsense Word Fluency. Referring to literacy

indicators 23, those fluency measures test for Phonological Awareness and provide a risk indicator for difficulty in acquiring crucial reading skills, respectively. The range 24 of scores achievable on the Initial Sound Fluency and Letter Naming Fluency measures is 0-80 and 0-110 respectively. Those result types 25 may be a raw score or a percentile, respectively. The result ranges 26, 27 and 28 provide a lookup table for calculating a measure of literacy from each of the fluency test scores. For the Initial Sound Fluency test, scores in the ranges 0-5, 6-10, and 11-80 are assigned literacy measures Struggling, Emerging, and On Track, respectively. For the Letter Naming Fluency risk indicator test, scores in the percentile ranges 0-20%, 21-39%, and 40-110% are assigned literacy measures Struggling, Emerging, and On Track, respectively. These two literacy measures are then weighted and combined to calculate a single measure of literacy, also in the categories Struggling, Emerging, and On Track. However, these ranges, categories and measures are one exemplary embodiment and others may be utilized. Figures 5B, 5C and 5D depict similar tables for the first, second and third grade respectively. The benchmarks provided for the First, Second and Third grades further comprise measures for Reading Connected Text for each grade level.

Figures 6A and 6B depict two parts of a class reading status report as presented by an embodiment of the present invention. In Figure 6A, each student 31 is listed individually along with his or her fluency test results and literacy measures 32, 33 and 34, from, in this example, Benchmark Period 1. An overall predictive measure of literacy 35, calculated from the student's test results, is also presented for each student. Figure 6B shows curriculum and instruction time recommendations for lower-performing (Struggling), medium-performing (Emerging) and higher-performing (On Track) students, as produced by an embodiment of the present invention. For example, recommendations are made for Struggling readers to spend additional instruction time on a specific Struggling Reader Intervention component in the curriculum, to administer Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency measures weekly, and to use specific Models and Games from the curriculum. Recommendations are made for low-scoring Emerging readers to use a

specific Struggling Reader Intervention component in the curriculum and to administer Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency measures monthly.

A class reading status report such as that shown in Figures 6A and 6B would be used regularly throughout the school year by the teacher to monitor the literacy of the students and to adjust the students' curriculum and amount of instruction time, according to each student's level of literacy. Lower- and medium-performing students can be tested and evaluated regularly between Benchmarks, allowing timely, targeted instructional intervention to ensure their achievement of grade-level literacy.

Figure 7 depicts a timeline plot of benchmark and weekly progress test results for an individual student for a single fluency test. Benchmark result 37 and weekly test results 38 are plotted on a timeline along with a grade level literacy target score 39, in order to show the student's progress toward grade level literacy. Such a graphical presentation of test scores assists the teacher to determine whether the student is making satisfactory progress toward grade level literacy.

Figures 8A and 8B illustrate a summary chart for the class of students reported on in Figures 6A and 6B. This report aggregates the calculated predictive measures of literacy for all students in the class and presents the results in Figure 8A as a bar chart 41 graphically depicting the number of students at each level of literacy and as a table of numeric data 42, numerically presenting the same information as the bar chart 41. Recommendations 43 for curriculum and instruction time, as described for Figure 6B, are also presented in this report, as shown in Figure 8B.

Measured levels of literacy can also be aggregated for all students within a school. Figure 9 depicts such an aggregate report. The report presents a bar chart 45 graphically depicting the number of students in the school at each level of literacy and a table of numeric data 46, numerically presenting the same information as the bar chart 45. Table 46 also presents aggregated numerical information on the number of students at each level of literacy in individual classes within the school.

A similar summary chart is presented in Figure 10 for all students within a school district. Again, a bar chart 48 graphically depicting the number of students in the district at each level of literacy and a table of numeric data 49, numerically presenting the same information as the bar chart 48, are presented summarizing the performance of the students. Table 49 also presents aggregated numerical information on the number of students at each level of literacy in individual schools within the district.

Monitoring the implementation of the method can increase the efficacy of the illiteracy prevention method of the present invention. In order to monitor and improve the implementation of the method, teachers and administrators are surveyed for information regarding their activities in implementing the method. The information collected in these surveys can then be presented to teachers and administrators to permit them to improve their implementation of the illiteracy prevention method. Data from the students is correlated and analyzed with data from the teachers and administrators, and provided in aggregate reports to provide early signs of low student progress and poor implementation of the method. Aggregate data is reported, showing a summary of the progress of implementation of the method in the classrooms. A report is included that provides recommendations for each classroom to prevent illiteracy. Information on the pacing of the curriculum in each classroom is collected and presented. Information on the plans and actions for students who need additional instruction time and support is recorded and reported on. Information on the quality and fidelity of the implementation of the system are recorded and reported on. Recommendations are made to teachers for improving their implementation of the method.

Figure 11 illustrates a teacher's survey as used in an embodiment of the present invention. The survey collects information regarding professional development activities by the teacher 51, such as the utility of professional development sessions attended. In this embodiment, pop-down menus are used to select an answer to the survey question, indicated in the figure by a box around the response and an inverted triangle next to the response box. Supervisory activities by

administrative personnel 52 are also gathered by the form, for example, the number of observation visits received by the teacher from different categories of administrators. Further, information on implementation activities 53 by the teacher is sought, such as the elements of the curriculum currently being taught in the class and a self-

5 assessment of the teacher's use of curriculum components. Information 54 on activities completed by lower-performing students is also collected on the form, for example, their attendance at extended instruction sessions and their completion of additional curriculum components.

Figures 12A and 12B depict forms for collecting information from supervisors

10 of the implementers of the illiteracy prevention method. Figure 12A collects information regarding the supervisor's recent activities in support of individual teachers: in this embodiment of the invention, that information includes whether the supervisor visited the teacher's classroom, reviewed the teacher's intervention plan for lower-performing or struggling readers, viewed the teacher's implementation

15 report. The information collected in the supervisor's survey in this embodiment of the invention also includes a report by the supervisor of the teacher's attendance at professional development sessions. Figure 12B illustrates a form for recording observations made by the supervisor while observing individual teachers in a classroom setting. In this embodiment, the observations recorded are of the teacher's

20 use of the Reading Station, Curriculum Guide and Learning Station instructional components.

Once the survey information from Figures 11, 12A and 12B is entered into the database of an embodiment of the present invention, an implementation report such as that shown in Figure 13 can be presented to the teacher. Included in this embodiment

25 of such a report are a summary of implementation activities 57, such as administration of Benchmarks and weekly monitoring tests, and timely completion of the teacher survey form. Aggregated information on the students' calculated predictive measures of literacy 58 is also presented in the implementation report. Such aggregated information in this embodiment of the invention includes a bar chart

30 depicting the number of students at each level of literacy in several recent Benchmark

Periods, allowing the teacher to observe the increase or decrease of number of students at each level of literacy. A graphical presentation of the teacher's instructional pacing 59 is also presented, showing the amount of curriculum the teacher is expected to have completed by the date of the report, juxtaposed with the amount of curriculum the teacher has actually completed. Further, a graphical presentation 60 of a supervisor's assessment of the teacher's use of the instructional components recorded in the form from Figure 12B is included in the implementation report, as an indicator of instructional fidelity. A summary of recent professional development activities 61 is presented. Additionally, information on remediation activities completed by each lower-performing student 62 is included in the implementation report, including the student's attendance at extended instruction time sessions, and the amount of time attending those sessions, and the student's completion of daily reading assignments.

In this embodiment of the present invention, a report such as that shown in Figures 14A and 14B can be prepared for a supervisor at the school level. Turning to Figure 14A, information presented in such a report in this embodiment of the invention includes a table of summarized implementation activities 64 for all classes and teachers in the school, including upcoming milestone deadlines and the degree of teachers' completion of milestones and of the supervisor's completion of the milestones. Aggregated student progress information 65 for each grade level in the school is also presented in the form of a bar chart depicting the number of students at each level of literacy in several recent Benchmark Periods, as described for Figure 13. Aggregated instructional pacing information 66 is presented graphically in this embodiment of the invention, as described for the presentation of the teacher's instructional pacing 59 in Figure 13. Turning to Figure 14B, the report also includes instructional fidelity information 67, as reported by the supervisor in the survey forms of Figures 12A and 12B, for each teacher in the school. In order to clarify the results reported for a specific teacher, the supervisor can click on that teacher's name and review details of that teacher's class, for example, a report such as that shown in Figure 13. Professional development information 68 is also presented, aggregated for

each grade level and listing needs reported by individual teachers. Information 69 regarding remediation activities completed by lower-performing students is shown, aggregated by grade level, including the number of lower-performing students in each grade level, the number of students attending extended instruction time sessions, the average amount of time spent attending those sessions, and the number of students completing daily reading assignments.

Figure 15 depicts a report for a district level supervisor, including aggregated student progress information 71 by grade level for all students in the school district, presented as described for aggregated student progress information 65 in Figure 14A. Instructional pacing information 72 is aggregated for each grade level in the district and presented, in this embodiment of the invention, in the same format described for aggregated instructional pacing information 66 in Figure 14A. Information 73 regarding remediation activities completed by lower-performing students in the district is shown, aggregated by grade level, including the number of lower-performing student in each grade level, the number of students attending extended instruction time sessions, the average amount of time spent attending those sessions, and the number of students completing daily reading assignments. Aggregated professional development information 74 for teachers at each grade level within the district is also presented, including the average number of professional development sessions attended. Additionally, a table of aggregated measures of literacy 75 is included, showing, in this embodiment of the invention, the number and percentage of students at each level of literacy at each school in the district. Details of performance at a specific school can be viewed by clicking on the school name, which brings up a report on that school, for example, a report such as that shown in Figures 14A & 14B.

Figure 16 depicts a computer network 80 which may be used to implement an embodiment of the present invention. Computer system 81, having processing and storage capabilities, is connected to input/output devices 82, 83, 84 and 85 by communication network 86. Input/output devices 82, 83, 84 and 85 may be personal computers used by teachers and administrators to enter information into the database

of an embodiment of the present invention or to view reports produced by the computer implementing the illiteracy prevention method. Entered information is stored in the computer system 81, and predictive measures of literacy and aggregated information for reporting purposes are calculated in the computer system 81.

5 Figure 17 illustrates an alternative embodiment of the present invention. Internet-based computer system 90 includes application server 91 in communication with data base server 92 and with the Internet communication network 96. Web browsers 93, 94 and 95 communicate with the application server 91 via the Internet communication network 96. In this embodiment of the illiteracy prevention method,
10 stored information is kept in data base server 92, calculations required to calculate measures of literacy and to aggregate information for reporting purposes are performed by application server 91. Teachers and supervisors may use web browsers 93, 94 and 95 to input data into the system and to view reports created by the system. In another embodiment, communication network 96 could be an intranet connecting
15 only computers and browsers within the school district.

 Figure 18 depicts some of the screens used by an embodiment of the present invention. From home screen 101 the user can execute login actions 102, which results in access to the literacy program home page 103. From this page the user can execute menu items to access other sections of the literacy program. The Create/Edit
20 menu item 104 may be used to create database entries for the students, classes, schools, and district monitored by the literacy system. The Benchmark Scores menu item 105 may be used to access screens for entering benchmark oral fluency test results and weekly progress test results. The Select Report menu item 106 may be used to view Summary Charts containing aggregated summary information about
25 classes, schools and the school district; Class Reading Status screens presenting information about classes; and Individual Profile screens showing information about individual students. From login actions 102, the user can also access implementer report screen 107, school supervisor report screen 108 and district supervisor report screen 109 and the screens used to enter the survey information that goes into those

reports. The user can also access literacy program home page 103 from implementer report screen 107 and school supervisor report screen 108.

5 This information on student progress and classroom implementation is causally related and is analyzed and correlated to trigger action steps to prevent illiteracy. As such, a method and system for achieving grade-level literacy in substantially all members of a predetermined set of students is described. However, the method may be extended to other subjects, activities, and teaching goals. Further the method may be extended to various grades, classes, and learning levels, among others.

10 In view of the above detailed description of the present invention and associated drawings, other modifications and variations will now become apparent to those skilled in the art. It should also be apparent that such other modifications and variations may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as set forth in the claims that follow.

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